

“Documentary Poll: The Critics,” *Sight and Sound*, September 2014, p. 32. [“Best Docs Ever”]

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The Griersonian definition and tradition of social documentary has been a straitjacket for understanding documentary media. In the past 25 years new voices have challenged the conventional thinking and new artists have presented imaginative alternatives. Critics expanded the field of nonfiction motion media. Audio documentary has moved farther and faster. Time for visual documentary to catch up.

Voted for:

- [October \(1928\)](#)

Sergei M. Eisenstein

October was originally thought of as a documentary: a historical recreation of an actual event. The crowd scenes were from annual celebratory re-enactments by the original participants. Real enough for me.

- [Enthusiasm \(1931\)](#)

Dziga Vertov

Pioneering early sound documentary. At the London premiere the filmmaker cranked the volume to the max, immersing the audience in the workings of a steel mill. Many fled, unable to handle the realities of industrial production.

- [Culloden \(1964\)](#)

Peter Watkins

Watkins's most watchable and still relevant film, a masterpiece of anti-war propaganda.

- [Castro Street \(1966\)](#)

Bruce Baillie

The perfect lyrical documentary. The machine in the garden: a founding American myth.

- [Fuses \(1966\)](#)

Carolee Schneemann
